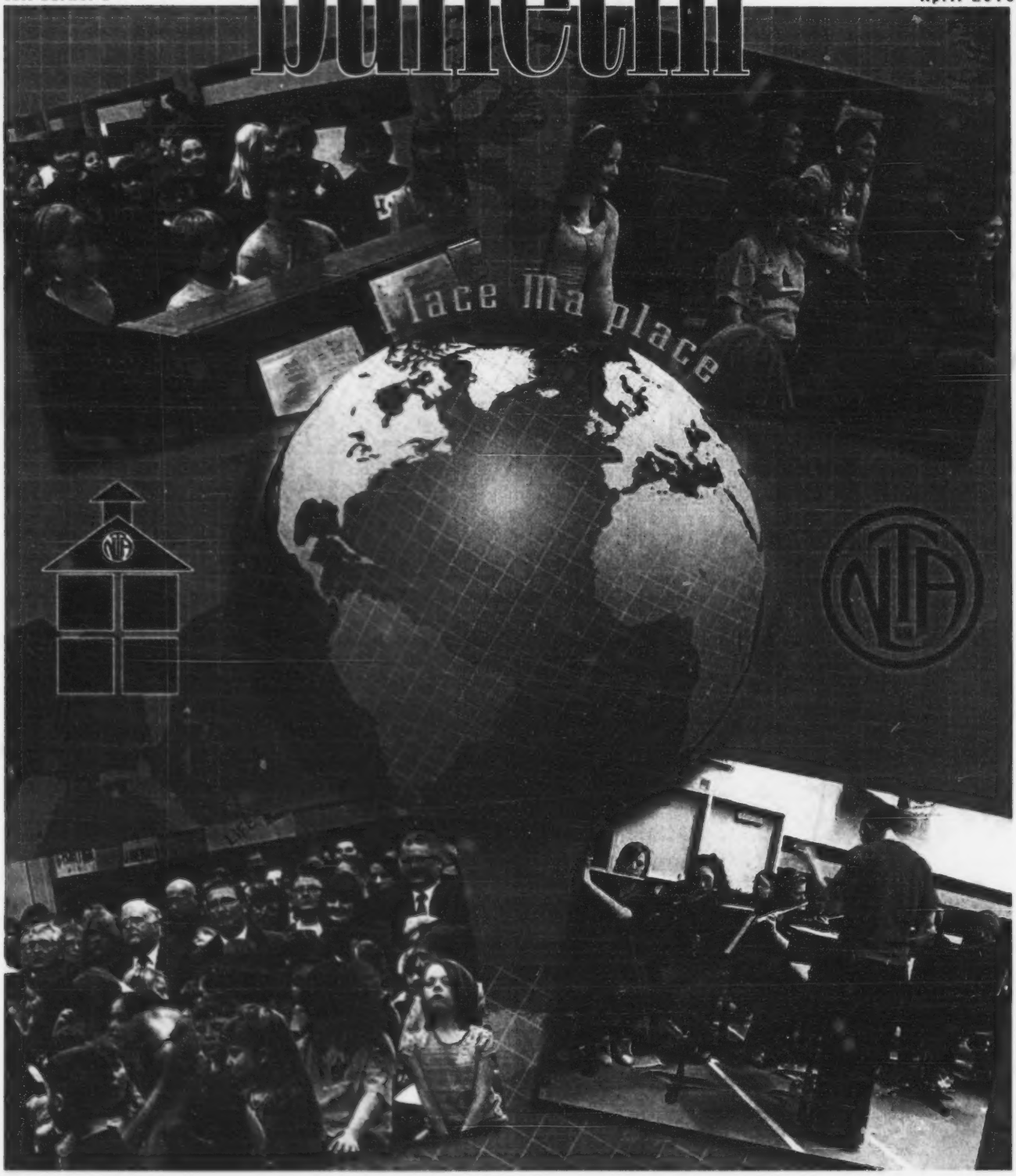
NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

THE bulletin

Vol. 53/No. 6

April 2010



Up Front from the President

Last month I had the privilege of attending the 2010 CTF Women's Issues Symposium, *Advancing Women's Rights... Next Steps*. I thought that women had come a long way in the last century, and in many ways we have. But as I listened to speaker after speaker I realized how much more we still have to do, not only in Canada, but also in the rest of the world. Women's rights are human rights.

Marina Nemat, a 45-year-old woman from Iran, was the first speaker at the Symposium. She is the author of the book *Prisoner of Tehran: A Memoir*. In 1982, as a 16-year-old student tired of hearing propaganda about Ayatollah Khomeini from members of the Revolutionary Guard who had replaced the teachers in her Tehran high school after the 1979 revolution, she asked the woman in charge of her calculus class if she could please get back to the main subject. "If you don't like what I am teaching, you can leave the classroom," the woman answered. So Nemat packed up her books and left the room. To her surprise, so did her whole class; it was the beginning of a school wide three-day student strike. She was subsequently arrested and imprisoned as a political prisoner. She was tortured, sentenced to death without a trial but rescued by one of the interrogators and given life imprisonment with thousands of other students who just wanted an education. She remained in prison for two years, two months and two days. She now lives in Canada with her husband and two children. She commented that she wrote her book to bring closure to her ordeal but it did not come. It was a way of coping with the injustices but as she stated, "on good days you can push the memories down but they never go away." Marina spoke to us about how teachers and union activists can make a profound difference in the lives of women and girls.

There are still some negative connotations around the feminist movement but I think this is mainly due to misinformation and lack of understanding of the plight of some women and children in Canada, but especially in other countries in the world. Dale Spender said, "Feminism has fought no wars. It has killed no opponents. It has set up no concentration camps, starved no enemies, practiced no cruelties. Its battles have been for education, for the vote, for better working conditions, for safety on the streets, for child care, for social welfare, for rape crisis centers, women's refuges, reforms in the law."

Women legally only became persons on October 18, 1929. Prior to this date governments kept using the excuse that under Canadian law, only men were considered 'persons', and only persons were eligible for important decisions. This meant that women could not be appointed to the Senate because The British North America Act declared, "women are persons in matters of pain and penalties, but are not persons in matters of rights and privileges." The Famous Five women: Emily Murphy, Henrietta Muir Edwards, Nellie McClung, Louise McKinney, and Irene Parlby initiated an appeal to the Supreme Court of Canada to make changes to The BNA Act. The first Supreme Court stated that individuals must be "fit and qualified" to be appointed to public office and therefore only men were eligible. However, the Famous Five were relentless in their pursuit and continued the fight to the Privy Council of England court of appeal and won for Canadian women the right to be 'persons' with all the privileges associated with that title. It has been within the last century that women have gotten the right to inherit the family fortune, run for office and vote in elections.

When you stop to think of it, this has only happened in recent history. We often become complacent and take our place in communities as the norm when there are women and men throughout Canada and the rest of the world fighting desperately for basic human rights. In Canada, women have made great strides in moving toward equality. However, there are several issues that still remain a struggle and a disparity for women in Canada. Single mothers are still the working poor or live in poverty and it affects them and their children. Violence against women is still an issue of great magnitude especially in our aboriginal population. Sexual exploitation of women and children is a major issue as is the fact that the majority of women still work in the traditional and relatively poorly paid clerical, sales, and services categories. Few women work in blue-collar occupations. A high and rising proportion of women work in professional occupations requiring higher levels of education and providing better levels of pay, but still relatively concentrated in public and social services. Women only make up 22% of the House of Commons but we represent 50% of the population. Women need to be at the decision-making tables so our concerns, needs and opinions are heard in order to influence what happens.

In most schools there are social justice committees. As teachers I feel it is our responsibility to teach men and women about gender issues. Teachers must explain the history of equality, to investigate where we are and where we need to go as a society that shows value and respect for all citizens. There must be equal representation of both genders to ensure that all sides of issues are explored fairly. We need to explore the lack of human rights of women and children in other parts of the world such as Afghanistan. We need to share our wisdom and views with our students to ensure that they see where we have come and where they still need to go.

Lily B.

THE
bulletin

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Conflict and Resolution Webinar

Free for NLTA Members

The NLTA will be hosting a **free** one-hour webinar for NLTA members about understanding conflict and how it prompts change in our lives.

Presented by Judy Beranger
Employee Assistance Coordinator
April 14, 2010
3:15 - 4:15 p.m.

Participation is limited to 100 participants.
Registration deadline is April 2, 2010.

To register go to **www.nlta.nl.ca**
and click the **"Conflict & Resolution Webinar"** link.

Once registered, further information on how to participate will be emailed.

Participants will need Internet access, DSL cable or better (dial-up is not recommended). There will be an audio component so headsets are required.

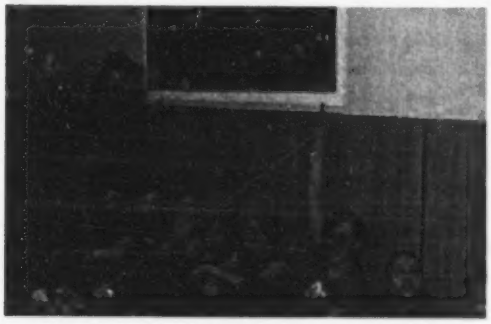
PROVINCIAL/NATIONAL/INTERNATIONAL

NEWS

BAY DE VERDE

Students showcase their talents through ArtsSmarts project

Tricon Elementary has just finished their first ArtsSmarts project titled "On Deck and Below". All students from Kindergarten to Grade 6 completed class projects centering on the theme. Under the guidance of artist Kelly McEntegart-Sheppard, the projects were connected with the various outcomes in each grade level. "The students thoroughly enjoyed working with Miss Kelly and gained so much learning from the project," said Wendy Clarke-Tizzard, Principal of Tricon Elementary. "We showcased our project to the community and had a wonderful turnout. Parents were very impressed with the caliber of work the students had completed. All artwork is on display throughout our school."



Artwork from Tricon Elementary's ArtsSmarts project is proudly displayed at the school.

DILDO

Hug A Tree Program at Woodland Elementary

Students from Woodland Elementary in Dildo participated in the Hug A Tree Program which was delivered through a partnership between the Placentia-Whitbourne RCMP (Constable Hire) and the Bay Robert's Wolverine Search and Rescue.

Students from Grades 1 to 6 learned how to survive if they were lost in the woods. They learned how to make a 'nest', to stay close to a tree and not move around and other survival tips. Each student received a survival bag, whistle and activity books as they enjoyed this interactive presentation.

Students from Woodland Elementary learn survival skills during the Hug a Tree Program.

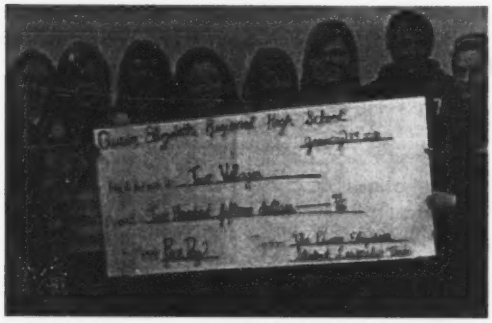
CONCEPTION BAY SOUTH

School raises money for "Young Farmer Scouts" of Timor Leste

On January 13, 2010 Queen Elizabeth Regional High School in Foxtrap participated in "Rice Day". The Queen Elizabeth leadership team and two teacher sponsors, Ms. Tina Blackmore and Ms. Sophia Slaney, took this project on by selling bowls of rice in the main lobby during lunch at a cost of $2 each. Money raised was donated to Two Villages, an organization that will use the money to help the "Young Farmer Scouts" of Timor Leste. Timor Leste is Asia's newest country and one of its poorest. It takes up half of a small island 400 miles off the North West coast of Australia. It became an independent country in 2003 after 20 years of violent struggle.

Two Villages is helping young people grow their agricultural and leadership skills, while also helping their community. Queen Elizabeth High School

raised over $220 to help the "Young Farmer Scouts" of Timor Leste. It was a great cause and many students and staff bought a bowl of rice or made a donation.



Students at Queen Elizabeth Regional High School display their donation to help the Young Farmer Scouts of Timor Leste.

AVONDALE

Students represent NL at National Ambassador Youth Forum for French for the Future

Nicole Hollohan (left) and Leanna Lewis

Two Grade 11 Core French students from Roncalli Central High in Avondale, Leanna Lewis and Nicole Hollohan, represented Newfoundland and Labrador at the National Ambassador Youth Forum for French for the Future in Halifax, Nova Scotia from February 13-16. Leanna and Nicole were chosen for their commitment to bilingualism, their enthusiasm for the French language and culture and their involvement in their school and community. Both girls have participated and been very successful in French public speaking competitions over the past couple of years.

During their four-day stay in Halifax, the girls participated in interactive workshops and activities that allowed them to explore Canada's Francophone cultures as well as discover the real-life advantages of being bilingual. The girls had a fantastic time, met lots of new friends and hope to inspire other students to get more involved in learning French.

ST. GEORGE'S

School raises money for sick children

From January 4 to February 14, 2010 the students and staff of Our Lady of Mercy School in St. George's (a school of under 150 students) saved all their pennies to donate to the Bay St. George Sick Children's Foundation and the Janeway Hospital.

The top class was Grade 2, which raised $511. Pictured below are the three students from Grade 2 who are also on the Hurricane House Team, the top penny raising team, which raised $550. This picture only shows $700 worth of the pennies. A total of $1,450 was raised altogether. The previous record for the school had been $700.

From left to right are Andrew Dunphy, Charlize Linthorne and Callie Bennett.

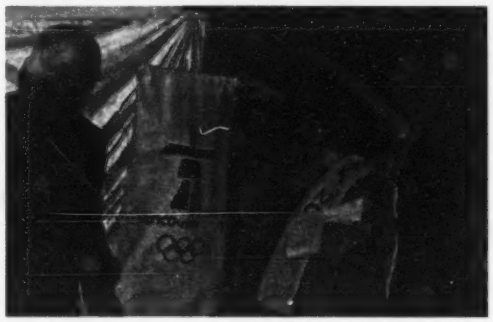
A cheque was sent to the Janeway for $50 and the remainder of the money, $1,400, will be donated to the Sick Children's Foundation of Bay St. George when they hold their telethon later this spring. Both the Grade 2 class and the Hurricane Team won pizza parties for their efforts. Principal Wallace Childs, in his first year as principal, was amazed at the response and challenged the children to begin saving their pennies for next year.

ST. JOHN'S

St. Andrew's celebrates opening of the Olympic Games

On the afternoon of February 12 students and staff of St. Andrew's Elementary in St. John's celebrated the Vancouver Olympics in their own way by having their very own Opening Ceremony. The ceremony was the beginning of a two-week celebration where students engaged in a variety of activities related to the Olympic Games and the participating countries.

"St. Andrew's, a unique school with over 33 national countries represented within the student populace, certainly felt a close relation to the theme of the Olympics," said Winston Taylor, Physical Education/Technology Resource teacher at St. Andrew's Elementary. "The bringing together of so many nationalities to celebrate peace, friendship and the pursuit of dreams through sport reflects greatly what St. Andrews is all about. Seeing so many students who have made such long journeys to begin new friendships and new dreams made the opening ceremony at St. Andrew's such a memorable event."



Principal Anne Marie Conway, along with MHA Bob Ridgley and MP Jack Harris, unfurl the Olympic banner to officially open the St. Andrew's Olympic Games.

The event was thoroughly enjoyed by special guests which included: St. John's Mayor Dennis O'Keefe; Bob Ridgley, MHA for St. John's North; Jack Harris, Member of Parliament for St. John's East; Mary Purchase, Senior Education Officer, Eastern School District; and Debbie Hanlon, St. John's City Councilor.

NLTA staff recognized for years of service

On January 22, 2010, six staff members of the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association were honoured at a special luncheon in recognition of their years of service to the Association.

Joann Russell and Paula Coleman were recognized for 10 years of service to the NLTA. Joann Russell is an assistant in the Benefits and Economic Services Division with responsibility for the Association's internal Research Centre. She is responsible for the database for grievance/arbitration, legal, EI, and Workers' Compensation case files. Paula Coleman is a Clerical Assistant in the Benefits and Economic Services Division and has assigned duties directly related to the Employee Assistance Program. She maintains the database for the Employee Assistance

Program, and is responsible for all clerical aspects of this program. She serves as replacement receptionist on the Association's Information Services desk.

Claudette Coombs was recognized for 15 years of service to the NLTA. Claudette has responsibility for coordinating the activities of the Employee Assistance Program for teachers which is housed within the Benefits and Economic Services Division. The program offers a variety of support services for teachers experiencing personal or work-related problems. She also has responsibility for the Wellness Promotion program designed to enhance the current health status of teachers.

Linda Farrell and Jim Fox were recognized for 25 years of service to the Association. Linda Farrell designs and coordinates the NLTA web site and maintains the Executive, Branch Presidents and School Representatives online mailing lists. Linda will usually be the first person you see or speak to by telephone at the NLTA office. She is responsible for all reception duties and provides secretarial/clerical assistance when required for the Communications Division. Jim Fox is responsible for administration of all funds of the Association. He is consultant to the Association's Finance and Property Committee and is responsible for making arrangements for all seminars, Joint Council meetings, Executive meetings and Conventions of the Association. Jim is also responsible for the preparation of the annual budget and its presentation to BGM.

Colleen Wade was recognized for 30 years of service to the Association. Colleen is the Senior Assistant in the Benefits and Economic Services Division. She coordinates the work of support staff within that division, and she coordinates travel arrangements for both Joint Council and Biennial General Meetings. She is the recording secretary for Joint Council and the Provincial Collective Bargaining Committee. She also serves as secretary to the Provincial Negotiating Team, Labrador West Negotiating Team, and the Workload Committee, and has responsibility for all work regarding hearings and appeals.

The NLTA would like to extend congratulations to all our staff members for their continued hard work and dedication to the Association.

MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY

Faculty of Education
Special Education Courses – Spring 2010
Interested in finishing your Bachelor of Special Education?

Offered by Distance:

Spring (12 weeks)	Education 3680
Intersession (6 weeks)	Education 3040, 3690
Summer (6 weeks)	Education 3040

Eight of the twelve Special Education courses are now available via the web.

Offered at the St. John's Campus:

Intersession (6 weeks)	Education 3650
Summer (6 weeks)	Education 3650, 4505, 4510, 4530

Questions?
Please contact the Office of Undergraduate Student Services, Faculty of Education. E-mail muneduc@mun.ca

For complete course offerings, visit **www.mun.ca/educ**

2010 NLTA Christmas card contest winners announced

Kacie Mouland, a Grade 4 student at Matthew Elementary in Bonavista and Claudia Sears, a Grade 4 student at St. Bernard's Elementary in Witless Bay, have been chosen as co-winners of the 2010 NLTA Christmas Card Contest. Kacie and Claudia each receive a $100 cash award and a framed copy of their winning entry. Their winning designs will appear on NLTA Christmas cards that will be sent to schools, businesses and other groups in December 2010. The theme for the 2010 contest was *What Christmas Means to Me*, and the contest was open to all Grade 4 students in the province.

The second place cash prize of $50 was awarded to Taylor Barrett, a Grade 4 student at Whitbourne Elementary School, and the third place cash prize of $25 was awarded to Grade 4 student Jillian Power of Cowan Heights Elementary in St. John's.

Entries are judged on the basis of their creativity, colour and ability to reproduce well. This year, 555 entries were received from Grade 4 students throughout the province.

Kacie Mouland's winning design for the 2010 NLTA Christmas Card Contest.

Claudia Sears' winning design for the 2010 NLTA Christmas Card Contest.

Second place winning design by Taylor Barrett.

Third place winning design by Jillian Power.

FLORENCE MARGARET VINCENT (NEE BLACKMORE), 1925 - 2009

Florence Vincent was born to Peter and Mary Blackmore in the beautiful community of Templeman, Bonavista Bay North in 1925. She received her early education at the United Church School in that community, then went on to St. John's to pursue a career in teaching, getting an early start, as many did at the time, with the six week training at Probationer Summer School at the old Prince of Wales College. Following this she went back to the Bonavista North area, spending her first years in Brookfield/ Wesleyville (now New West Valley), and later in the community of Lumsden. About this time she became acquainted with a young man by the name of Maxwell Vincent of Newtown who was also a teacher and later to become the director of child welfare and corrections with the Department of Social Services. Flo and Max were married in December of 1948 and moved to St. John's where Max pursued his career and Flo took some time from her career to raise two children – Shirley and Glenn – who both went on to Memorial University and became teachers as well, following in the footsteps of mom and dad and both making significant contributions to the educational growth and development of our youth within our province and later on to mainland Canada.

Flo went back into the work force after completing the LPN course and landed a job at the Sunshine Camp, a rehabilitation centre for victims of polio and other afflictions.

Flo loved teaching and had the desire and energy to get back into the profession. After enrolling in Memorial University she was fortunate to land a teaching position at the Children's Rehab Centre in Pleasantville. Her university career coincided roughly with that of her children. She graduated in 1973 with a B.A.(Ed.), with her son-in-law Garry; and in 1976, with her son Glenn, with her Arts degree; not only a loving and caring mom, but truly an appropriate role model and mentor. At this time she was already the Principal of the Academic part of the Rehab Centre, a position she held at the time of her retirement. Aunt Flo was a charming, beautiful and graceful lady and anyone who came within the aura of her kindness and grace, including the writer, were truly blessed.
(Submitted by Howard Sooley, B.A.(Ed.) B.A., M.Ed., nephew)

Florence Vincent

In Memoriam
Submission Guidelines

Submissions to In Memoriam should be a **maximum of 250 to 300 words** and may contain a photo of the deceased. In Memoriams should be submitted within a timely manner – normally within the same school year (if possible) of the death of the teacher. Information may be included on where the deceased lived and taught, their education, accomplishments, community involvement and family information.

It is preferred that all submissions be e-mailed to Lesley-Ann Browne, Editor of *The Bulletin*, at labrowne@nlta.nl.ca. If submitting by mail, please address to: Editor, *The Bulletin*, Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association, 3 Kenmount Road, St. John's, NL, A1B 1W1. Submissions may also be faxed to 726-4302 or toll-free at 1-877-711-6582. Please be sure to include a contact name, school or business name, mailing address, telephone number and e-mail address.

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"It was a rejuvenation, a learning and a chance to feel so special."

The Journey Begins…

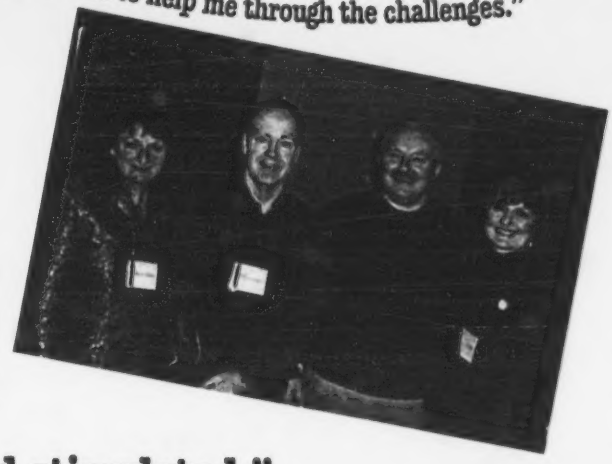
Once again this year the NLTA partnered with the Faculty of Education at Memorial University and the Eastern, Nova Central and Western School Districts to offer a unique learning and sharing experience to teachers who are new to the profession. The Journey Begins is a conference designed specifically for beginning teachers.

During this learning journey teachers were given the opportunity to reflect, engage in problem solving, share stories, analyze case studies, role play experiences and catalogue a number of teaching strategies which were modeled by the facilitators, Beverley Park of the NLTA's Professional Development Division and Hayward Blake, Field Services Coordinator at Memorial University's Faculty of Education. The themes were developed from focus group input with novice teachers and using the feedback from previous sessions. Among the topics addressed were professionalism, work/life balance, classroom management and interpersonal relationships.

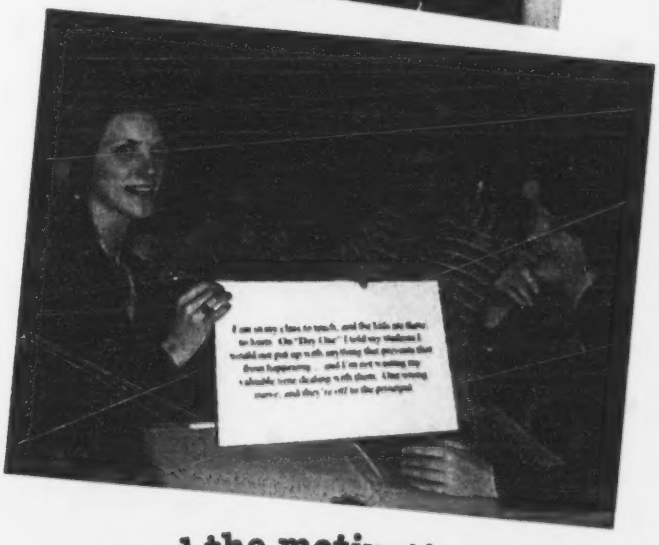
The comments of the participants speak loudly of the value of this session.

"It was great to reconnect with people I went to MUN with and to meet new people."

"It was great to get the reassurance that the NLTA are there to help me through the challenges."



"I was engaged and stimulated."



"I liked the motivation I felt when I walked out the door."

Are You Thinking About Retiring?

Information You Need to Know

Under the Teachers' Pension Act, a teacher is eligible for pension benefit:

(a) At age 60 with between five and 24 years of pensionable service.

(b) At age 55 or after with at least 25 years of pensionable service.

(c) After completing thirty years of worked service* regardless of age.

(d) Reduced pension with 29 years of worked service and at least thirty years of pensionable service. Pension will be reduced based on the number of months a teacher will be retired prior to reaching age 55.

*(*worked service refers to all pensionable service, except university study buy-back that was purchased prior to 1991.)*

Access to Pension Estimator

Teachers also have access to a pension estimator through the main page the NLTA website (www.nlta.nl.ca), click on "Publications" and go to "P". Teachers can now go on-line and using their individual Teacher Benefit Statement that they receive from the Pensions Division, input their salary information and obtain an estimate of their expected pension at a chosen point of retirement. As well, there is a web site dedicated to the Teachers' Pension Plan under the government site at www.fin.gov.nl.ca/fin/government_employee_benefits/pensions/plans_TPP.html.

Checklist for Retiring Teachers

The following checklist is designed to assist teachers as they participate and plan for this upcoming life phase change.

- ☐ Apply to the NLTA to attend a pre-retirement seminar up to two years prior to your year of retirement;
- ☐ Confirm the eligible date of your retirement with the Pensions Division at the pre-retirement seminar or by contacting Pensions Division.
- ☐ Submit your resignation to School Board (do not resign until eligibility has been confirmed): one month notice is required if retirement is to occur prior to Christmas; three months notice (March 31st) is required if retirement is to occur after Christmas.
- ☐ Apply for pension by completing the appropriate "Teachers' Pension" application.
- ☐ Complete and submit the Direct Deposit Form to Pensions Division.
- ☐ Apply for severance pay by completing the "Severance Payment Request" form.
- ☐ Confirm/consult with Johnson Incorporated on Group Insurance coverage: 1-800-563-1528.
- ☐ Consider joining the Retired Teachers' Association by completing the application form and submitting it to the Pensions Division.
- ☐ Consider seeking personal financial advice regarding financial decisions related to retirement.
- ☐ Keep your mind active and your body healthy. Enjoy life!

Changes Effective Upon Retirement

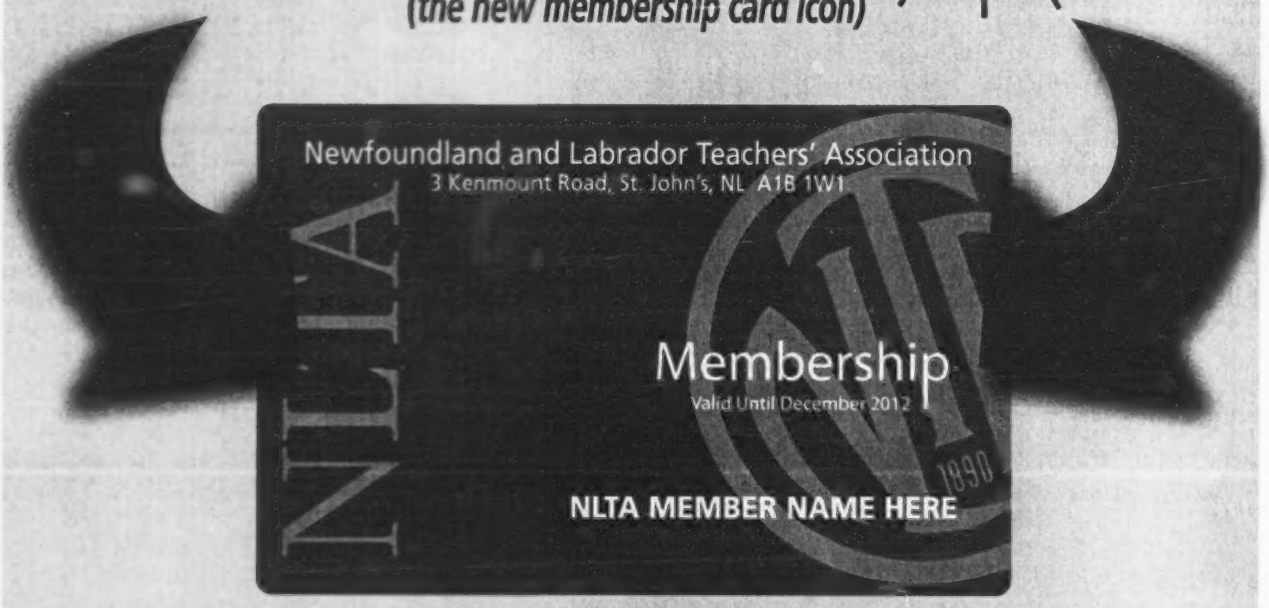
- NLTA Membership status changes from Active Membership to Life or Associate Membership.
- Access to the services and benefits of the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) terminates.
- Basic Life Insurance coverage reduces to twice annual pension from twice annual salary (provided coverage is maintained and premiums paid); coverage terminates at age 65 and is replaced by a members only $15,000 benefit after age 65.
- Eligibility for EI ceases (unless a person becomes a "re-established worker" or is on a forced medical retirement).

Any questions or comments can be directed to an Administrative Officer in the Benefits and Economic Services Division of the NLTA.

NLTA Membership Cards Expire June 2010

In order to receive your new NLTA membership card go to www.nlta.nl.ca and click -

(the new membership card icon)



For further information contact:

Lesley-Ann Browne, NLTA Communications Officer
726-3223 or 1-800-563-3599 ext. 228
labrowne@nlta.nl.ca

Education Week Opening Ceremonies Templeton Academy, Meadows

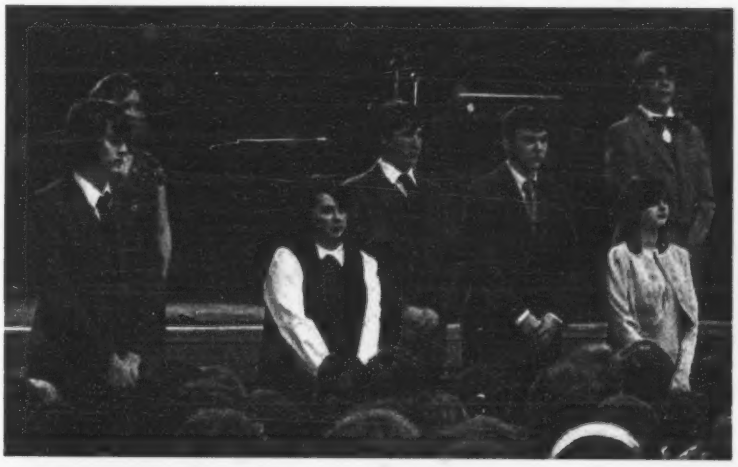
The Opening Ceremonies for Education Week 2010 took place at Templeton Academy in Meadows on Monday, March 8.

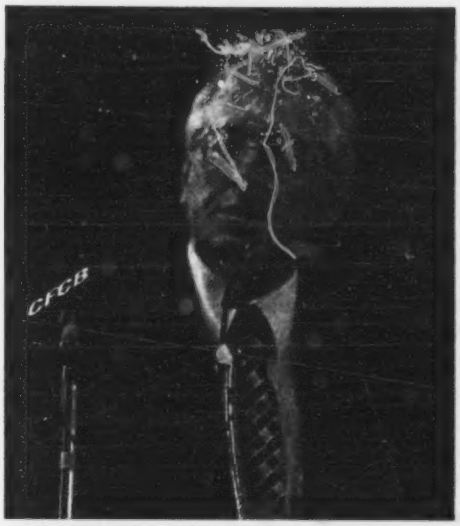
The event featured performances by the Templeton Academy Concert Band, the Primary and Elementary Choirs, and the Junior and Senior High Drama Clubs. A series of short readings were also performed by five Grade K-6 students from Templeton Academy based on this year's Education Week sub-themes of home, community, province, country and world.

Besides all the students who performed during the event, students from Templeton were also Masters of Ceremonies, read the Education Week Proclamation in both English and French, cut the Education Week cake and greeted the invited guests and parents when they arrived.

The President of the NLTA, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Education, the Director of Education with the Western School District, the Principal and Vice-principal all addressed the audience.

The teachers and students at Templeton Academy had a great start to Education Week 2010 and the Opening Ceremonies were enjoyed by all.

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"You won't believe what I just heard..."

Unraveling Rumor and Gossip

by JUDY BERANGER

Mary, an extrovert, taught class next door to Ann, an introvert. Their methods of teaching were as opposite as their personalities. Mary's class was louder than Ann's and the day came when Ann decided she couldn't take anymore. During her prep period Ann exploded in the staffroom telling anyone who would listen that she could no longer deal with Mary's inability to control her unruly class.

Is Ann's assumption about Mary's teaching capabilities founded on fact? Have you ever found yourself in Mary's situation – being judged as a result of rumor or gossip? How did you find out? How did that feel? Who started it? What did you learn from the experience?

"Generally, people are very good and mean well... Look at what has worked for you in the past to keep your character and integrity intact and repeat what you know helps make the world a better place to be."

Merriam-Webster defines *rumor* as an unverified account or explanation of events circulating from person to person and pertaining to an object, event, or issue. A review of the research on rumor by Pendleton in 1998 found that research across sociology, psychology, and communication studies uncovered widely varying definitions. Most theories agree that rumor involves some kind of statement whose veracity is not quickly or ever confirmed.

Rumor is a tidbit of information or story that may or may not be true as it has not been verified. Unfortunately, we're all guilty of spreading rumors. It usually starts innocently enough, we pass on the information as if it is true and then it gets passed on until it becomes unrecognizable. Depending on who is conveying the rumor, the telling can change considerably in one passing.

A Rumor

Sam applied for educational leave. Of those granted leave, the only two people he knew were department heads from two different schools. Sam wondered aloud in the staffroom if preference was being given to department heads. That evening, a couple of teachers attending a function in their community remarked to friends that they "... heard that only department heads are being considered for educational leave this year."... and the rumor began!

Merriam-Webster defines *gossip* as idle talk focusing more on personal or private affairs. It is one of the oldest and most common means of sharing unproven facts and views, and has a reputation for the introduction of endless variations of a story. Gossip was identified by Robin Dunbar, an evolutionary biologist, as aiding social bonding in large groups. As in rumor, people who gossip feel socially connected. Personal information is spread without the person's awareness. It can be true, false and more often than not, a lie that at one point may have had a shred of truth. It is often rooted in misunderstanding, anger, jealousy, revenge, with the intent of hurting. People who spread rumors may temporarily feel socially connected and the more they perceive interest the more the story is embellished.

Not all types of rumors and gossip are alike, and some can be more hurtful and damaging. An example of this is "defamation". Merriam-Webster says it is also called slander for transitory statements, and libel for written or otherwise published words. It is the communication of a negative statement that is implied to be factual. Slander refers to a malicious, false and defamatory *spoken* statement or report, while libel refers to communication such as *written* words. Slander can be quite serious as it is meant to purposely damage a person's reputation promoting the likelihood of humiliation and turning people against the person being slandered.

Remora, who was often referred to as the community gossip and self-appointed judge of people's morals, kept involving herself in other people's business. Most people were unappreciative of her activities, but feared her

enough to maintain their silence. Remora made a big mistake when she accused Sam, new to the community, of being an alcoholic based on her observation of his car parked in front of the town's only bar for a full afternoon. She commented to Sam and others that everyone seeing it there would know he was an alcoholic. Sam, a man of few words, stared at her for a moment and walked away. He said nothing. Later that evening, Sam quietly parked his car in front of Remora's house…and left it there all night!

People who gossip have reported feeling superior to the person they are gossiping about. Gossip is a judgmental action that temporarily assists people to feel in control and part of the crowd, albeit this sense of belonging is false. Reducing to the level where you destroy another with cruel insinuations or petty remarks is toxic for all involved, even for those who just listen. Even if we choose not to respond verbally, remaining passive can be interpreted as acceptance.

Gossip and rumors are linked to low self esteem, jealousy, and a self righteous person "setting things straight". Bearing the brunt of nasty remarks can be traumatizing and painful. Even lack of formal communication can give rise to rumor and gossip and be quite hurtful. If people do not have all the information they sometimes make it up. If they believe someone is not recognized enough or recognized too much gossip can easily be ignited.

What can we do to reduce gossip and rumor?
A good example that can be applied to all grades comes from a 4th grade teacher:

When I taught 4th grade, the 3rd grade teachers kept warning me about this little boy I might get next year. Sure enough, when the time came to see our rosters, that little boy was slated for my class. I made a decision to give this kid a clean slate and pretend I knew nothing about his past. I even had a talk with him the first day of school and told him some of the things I had heard about him. I told him that those things were in the past and that I was giving him a fresh start. My expectations for him were high, and he rose to the challenge. He ended up being one of my best-behaved students and worked very hard to earn high grades. He was not the same kid I was "warned" about. It's amazing how gossip can damage a person for life... What if I hadn't given this kid a chance? What might he have become?

Generally, people are very good and mean well. Most will want to move beyond the negative. Some need help. Look at what has worked for you in the past to keep your character and integrity intact and repeat what you know helps make the world a better place to be.

Suggestions to consider for combating gossip and rumor:

- Identify where gossip or rumor is likely to happen and avoid these times.
- Make a difference one situation at a time. Speak up when rumors and gossip need to be challenged and change your behavior the next time you feel the urge to add to the fast moving story!
- Your NLTA Code of Ethics is an excellent resource with very clear guidelines for professional conduct and how we need to behave and remain respectful in difficult situations.
- Encourage open and clear communication. In the absence of any meaningful communication, rumor and gossip thrives.
- Model words you can use to tell people you do not want to participate in gossip. Be consistent, strong, friendly and give clear messages to the gossiper… "I find listening to this sort of thing zaps my energy and I really want to have a good relationship with all my colleagues."
- Consider some form of introspection to see if you can determine the underlying explanations as to your desire to engage in such behaviour.
- If this is creating stress in your life know that the Employee Assistance Program is always there to help.
- Avoid gossip and rumor like the plague. You are next on the list.
- Say only things you would be proud to have quoted.
- Be gently assertive. Challenge the negative conversation in favor of respectful conversations that set the goal of reducing rumor and gossip.
- Keep personal information to yourself and respect people's right to privacy.
- Steer conversations to fruitful places. Practice how you might handle the next time someone wants to gossip. "I can't imagine how hurt Sam would be if he knew people were saying these things."
- Try not to judge the intentions and motives of others.

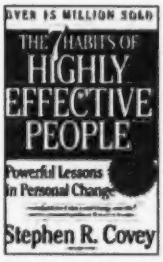
Martin Luther King once said that the ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy. Where do you stand in the midst of gossip and rumor?

Judy Beranger is a wellness and employee assistance coordinator with the Employee Assistance Program for Teachers. For confidential assistance contact Judy Beranger (ext. 265) or Ross Flood (ext. 242). Suggestions for future articles for this section are welcomed.

The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People

by GEORGE TUCKER

Dr. Steven Covey



Many of you have probably heard of *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, a book written by Dr. Stephen Covey. In fact, many educators in our province have participated in the 18-hour workshop as it has been offered by the Eastern School District and its processor school boards as an integral component of its *Leadership at Work* initiative for almost ten years.

I became personally involved with *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* material when I participated in the workshop during the summer of 2000. Later that year, the former Avalon East School District decided to have three of its employees trained as certified 7 Habits facilitators. I was one of the fortunate trio who went off to Calgary for a week to engage in a very strenuous facilitator training course. Since being trained as a facilitator, I have been privileged to have facilitated numerous 7 Habits workshops with groups of educators at the Avalon East School District, the Eastern School District, the Department of Education and now as part of my portfolio at the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association. All of the sessions have been tremendously meaningful for me. In fact, I continue to learn about and embrace new aspects or interpretations of the 7 Habits every time I am given the opportunity to facilitate a session as each group of workshop participants tend to bring their own unique personalities, perspectives, paradigms and discussion points which must be weighed for merit.

At the Association I am now privileged to be in a position to co-facilitate 7 Habits workshops with my colleague, Steve Brooks, who joined the NLTA about a year ago. Steve is an Administrative Staff Officer in our Benefits and Economic Services Division. He was trained as a facilitator for *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* when he worked with the Eastern School District. Steve brings a wonderful insightful perspective to the training and his story-telling prowess is legendary.

Given that your Association is now licensed as a provider of *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* and given that two of your staff officers are certified 7 Habits facilitators, all members of the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association are eligible candidates for the training. We simply need to work out the logistics of hosting a session

Background

In *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, author Stephen R. Covey presents a holistic, integrated, principle-centered approach for solving personal and professional problems. With penetrating insights and pointed anecdotes, Covey reveals a step-by-step pathway for living with fairness, integrity, service, and human dignity – principles that give us the security to adapt to change and the wisdom and power to take advantage of the opportunities that change creates.

Workshop Features

The 7 Habits workshop helps participants learn how to improve performance and results by pulling together at the highest levels of effectiveness and teamwork. During some 18-hours of compelling, hands-on instruction, participants discover how to:

- Break ineffective behaviors and tendencies
- Create high levels of trust, unity, and synergy
- Develop strong, interdependent relationships
- Take initiative and responsibility
- Focus on key priorities
- Build win-win relationships
- Communicate effectively
- Value diversity
- Practice continuous improvement

Outline – The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People

Habit 1 – Be Proactive

This is the ability to control one's environment, rath-

er than have it control you, as is so often the case. Self determination, choice, and the power to decide one's response to stimuli, conditions and circumstances are powerful aspects of this habit.

Habit 2 – Begin with the End in Mind
Covey calls this the habit of personal leadership; leading oneself that is, towards what you consider your aims. By developing the habit of concentrating on relevant activities you will build a platform to avoid distractions and become more productive and successful.

Habit 3 – Put First Things First
Covey calls this the habit of personal management. This is about organizing and implementing activities in line with the priorities and aims established in Habit 2.

Habit 4 – Think Win-Win
Covey calls this the habit of interpersonal leadership, necessary because achievements are largely dependent on co-operative efforts with others. He says that win-win is based on the assumption that there is plenty for everyone, and that success follows a co-operative approach more naturally than the confrontation of win-or-lose.

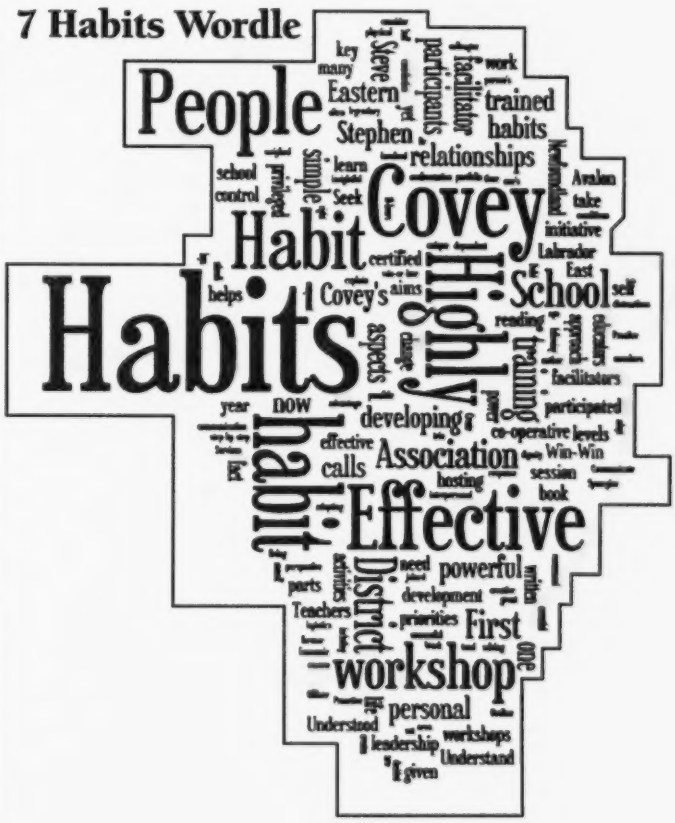
Habit 5 – Seek First to Understand and Then to be Understood
This habit is one of the great maxims of the modern age. This is Covey's habit of communication, and it is extremely powerful. Covey helps to explain this in his simple analogy 'diagnose before you prescribe'. Habit 5 – Seek First to Understand and Then to be Understood, is simple, and yet effective. It is essential for developing and maintaining positive relationships in all aspects of life.

Habit 6 – Synergize
Covey says this is the habit of creative co-operation. It is the principle that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts, which implicitly lays down the challenge to see the good and potential in the other person's contribution.

Habit 7 – Sharpen the Saw
This is the habit of self renewal, says Covey, and it necessarily surrounds all the other habits, enabling and encouraging them to happen and grow. Covey interprets the self into four parts: the spiritual, mental, physical and the social/emotional, which all need attention to ensure proper maintenance and development.

Conclusion
Stephen Covey's, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, is a simple set of rules for life – inter-related and synergistic, and yet each one powerful and worthy of adopting and following in its own right. For many people, including yours truly, reading Covey's work and participating in the workshop training, literally is life-changing. Even though *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* book was written in 1990, it has timeless applicable actions and recommendations to practicing and development these effective habits. I absolutely recommend reading it, studying it, and developing the practice to turn these 7 key ideas into habits. And, if possible, take action and investigate the possibility of hosting a 7 Habits workshop in your school or geographical area.

If you are interested in exploring the possibility of hosting a "The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People" workshop, please contact George Tucker, Administrative Officer in the PD Division of the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association at gtucker@nlta.nl.ca.



Inclusion and Differentiated Instruction

Integrating ICTs Into My Inclusive Practices

by JIM MURPHY

So, what is all the talk in education in Newfoundland and Labrador? Well, it is highly likely, or has to be at least top three, that it is INCLUSION. Although not an expert in the area, I can readily recognize, even in the broader context of inclusion as a sociological issue, the importance of inclusive education in student development and student success. As educators, it is incumbent on us to analyze the needs of all students and deliver curriculum in such a manner that all can learn in the classroom. This is no easy task and the most difficult part is developing a mindset that fosters inclusive education to ensure that more and more students become contributing members of society as adults. And so we look to the experts in the field to help provide direction so as to identify the tools and strategies we require to design an inclusive classroom. Department and district consultants and specialists are a great start, district itinerants as well. But it may well be the teacher in the room next to you who has developed some practical approaches to inclusive classrooms.

Furthermore, there are many things to consider when you reflect on tools and strategies for an inclusive classroom such as: classroom climate (environment), which includes proper seating, acoustics, access to assistive technologies, and, most importantly, understanding how children learn best; their interests, their talents and skills and the mechanisms they have already developed to compensate for their learning difficulties. "Know the learners, assess the learners both formally and informally, and provide adjustable assignments that offer choice and can be tapered to individual learning styles, instructional strategies and sound curriculum approaches." (Gregory, 2002) So, what then of the role of technology in inclusion and how can it be used to differentiate instructional practices? Well, technology is critical in supporting both Differentiated Instruction (DI) and Inclusion and simply cannot be pushed aside in an age where it is as much a part of day-to-day living and events in our society as the air we breathe.

Before taking on the task of differentiating instruction, I must know my learners and build approaches based on their needs. Getting to know your learners is something that must happen early in the year and typically happens in an informal manner as issues with some students begin to arise. In analyzing their needs, however, some things to consider are: age, gender, socio-economic circumstances, learning styles, learning pace and rate, left or right handedness, multiple intelligences, personal qualities, personal interests, ability level(s), potential learning difficulties, family circumstances, and personal health and well-being. (www.sde.com/Teacher-Resources.asp)

What is Differentiated Instruction?

Once you feel you have analyzed your learners' needs, you then angle instruction to meet those diverse needs. One colleague in the field suggested that in order to differentiate, start with the most difficult case in your room and work your way towards those students who need enrichment. The following are examples of approaches that allow for a varied instructional approach in your classroom. The intent of this article is to focus on the more technological approaches, therefore leaving you to Google if you require more information on any of the following approaches. I have also provided links in the resources section at the end of this article to many of these approaches:

- Anchor activities – specified ongoing activities on which students work independently – ongoing assignments which students can complete throughout a unit. (Big Ideas)
- Sponge activities – Soak up excessive time and minimize dead time. They give the students something meaningful to think about, say and/or do during the downtime that may occur when a lesson finishes a little earlier than expected.

- KWL – a graphic organizer
- Question-Answer Relationship or QAR (Raphael, 1982; 1986) is a great way to help students figure out how to go about answering questions based on a given text.
- Think-pair-share – cooperative learning
- Literature Circles
- Text Response
- Individual Contract
- Curriculum Compacting
- Tiered Assignments
- WebQuests
- Learning Centers
- Cooperative Learning
- Flexible Group Practices.

(from www.sde.com/Teacher-Resources.asp)

What are some examples of technologies that I can use to support DI?

Technology can be a great support to differentiating instructional practices, and can especially make the task of creating and recreating, editing, archiving and sharing successful approaches more efficient, not to mention the motivation that technology integration often represents for students. The following is a brief synopsis of some existing technologies that have found or are finding their way into classrooms and are influencing how we deliver instruction and allowing for differentiation of instruction.

SmartBoards

SmartBoards bring web and digital resources directly to the classroom. They are appealing to students and provide sound, visual and tactile opportunities to them. With the accompanying Notebook software, teachers can create and use graphic organizer and visuals, access web and digital content, and produce interactive approaches that are stimulating and appealing to a variety of learning styles. The web is replete with such resources. Try visiting the SmartTech site where you will find plenty to get you started. (http://education.smarttech.com/ste/en-us/)

Another product, the Senteo interactive response system, allows the user to create questions and have students provide responses on the fly, with instantaneous feedback. It is a great way to check for understanding and adapt instructional approaches based on the feedback received through the system. Districts are beginning to use these technologies because they motivate learners and provide direct feedback to students and teachers about the learning that has taken place.

Graphic Organizers & Inspiration/Kidspiration

Instead of paper and pencil graphic organizers, Inspiration and Kidspiration (www.inspiration.com) offer a gambit of visual and organizational tools that teachers can use to differentiate instructional strategies. In particular, it provides supports to visual and kinaesthetic learners, who can manipulate graphic organizers directly in the software. Or, teachers create items such as mind maps, flow charts, concept maps and so forth that they can subsequently integrate into more visually appealing learning activities for the classroom. Venn diagrams, thought webs, KWLs, sequential mapping and organizational charts, all with accompanying graphics, are easily created and manipulated using this software. Whether it is brainstorming for a language arts class or looking at historical timelines, this software greatly enhances and differentiates instruction.

The Web

With a projector, a pc and the web, virtual resources open a realm of possibilities that go well beyond the scope of the written text and offer opportunities to cater to many learning styles in the classroom. I cannot begin to explore the use of web resources as a means of varying instructional approaches. Firstly, teachers can access the myriad of already created resources to support their instruction. But secondly, they access the web to bring real time learning activities to the classroom. Whether it is the weather, news, interactive math sites (have a look at Jim Reed's work – http://staff.argyll.epsb.ca/jreed/), sports, medicine or science, chances are there is a site or online resource that will support your curriculum delivery and allow you to do it using a variety of approaches. It is however, still a tool. It is incumbent on the teacher to effectively integrate it in a differentiated manner. But, used in conjunction with such approaches as WebQuests, project-based learning or anchor activities, it will allow the teacher to create a rich and inclusive learning environment.

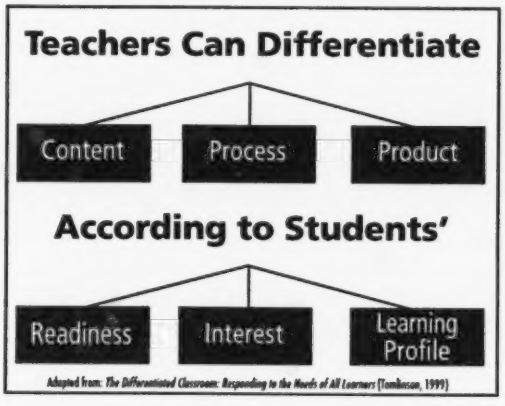
Gaming

Is there a place for gaming in the classroom? Are we ready for this? How can it work?

For boys in particular, gaming is a daily ritual. From Rock Band to World of Warcraft, boys in particular spend an inordinate amount of time immersed in games. So, do we want to encourage this in an educational context? Well, if it can allow students to achieve outcomes, then why not? But first, it must be structured and well planned; it is not simply about throwing a PS or Game Cube into the classroom.

One form of gaming in particular, simulators, is

proving to be an interesting approach to instruction. Any of the variety of simulation software available can certainly provide a learning experience. SimCity, Sim Ant, Sim Earth all allow for the creation of virtual worlds where the creator oversees and creates the parameters. These have been around for some time, but it appears as though they are still relatively under utilized in classrooms. Challenging students to create and maintain these virtual worlds certainly is educational. The following link provides background on the educational uses of SimCity: http://jpe.sagepub.com/cgi/content/refs/27/2/113. (Click on the "full article" link on the right margin to download the article in its entirety). Virtual reality software also continues to impact education and the possibilities are virtually "out of this world"; Second Life being one example. (http://secondlife.com)



Assistive Technologies

Assistive technologies for students with physical challenges also allow teachers to differentiate instruction and can be of great benefit to the entire class. Take, for example, a technology such as voice recognition software that allows a student to interact with a word processor through voice. The Department of Education already invests substantially in assistive technologies. Contact the Division of Student Support Services at the Department for more information on what is available.

In the DI world, differentiated instruction and all its possibilities is referred to as a journey and not a destination. Take the time to explore the possibilities and how you can use technologies to enhance learning experiences for all learners. Check out the info on Myvtc.ca under teaching resources. There are resources on inclusion, differentiated instruction, sample graphic organizers, links to software and many other resources that you can use in your teaching and learning.

Other Technologies

Consider investing time in researching how you could integrate some of the following technologies to differentiate the content, process or product. Consider, for example, how you can use handheld devices such as Smartphones and mp3 players for podcasting, videocasting, e-books, mobile web, twittering, text messaging or mobile msn and Facebook. They offer many ways of delivering content in engaging manners that can meet learning styles well beyond what is offered in regular classroom settings. Noteworthy as well is the use of Web 2.0 technologies such as wikis, photo/video sharing, forums, blogs and so forth as a means of sharing, co-creating and authoring; all great tools for differentiating product in the classroom.

Concluding Thoughts

Again, I am not an expert in DI, but when faced with circumstances under which we need to be able to adapt to our learners needs, I feel it is incumbent on us as educators to become more cognisant of what can be best summarized as good teaching practices: recognizing learning needs and subsequently adapting content, process and product in order that all students meet curriculum outcomes wherever possible.

Jim Murphy is Coordinator of the Virtual Teacher Centre. He can be reached at jmurphy@nlta.nl.ca.

Resources

- Gregory, G., Chapman, C. (2002) *Differentiated Instructional Strategies: One Size Doesn't Fit All*. Corwin Press, Inc., Thousand Oaks California.
- www.saskschools.ca/curr_content/bestpractice/anchor/index.html
- www.sde.com/Teacher-Resources.asp
- www.k8accesscenter.org/index.php
- http://teachersnetwork.org/NTNY/nychelp/Professional_Development/sponge.htm
- www.greece.k12.ny.us/instruction/ela/6-12/Reading/Reading%20strategies/QAR.htm
- www.alliance.brown.edu/pubs/voices/4qrt1999/almost.shtml (SimCity)
- http://jpe.sagepub.com/cgi/content/refs/27/2/113 (SimCity)

Ward Off 'Nature-Deficit Disorder' by Taking Students Outdoors

by HELEN SPENCER

Nature-deficit disorder – is this another item to add to the long list of problems that children can be diagnosed with? It's a phrase, hesitantly coined by Richard Louv in his book *Last Child in the Woods*, to describe 'the human cost of alienation from nature, among them: diminished use of the senses, attention difficulties, and higher rates of physical and emotional illnesses'. It's brought on by a lack of real connection with the outside world and nature.

One would think that here in Newfoundland, where we are surrounded by nature, that no one ought to be labeled as having nature-deficit disorder. However, as you know, there are many families who are so caught up in the world of work, home, TV, computers and kids' schedules that there is little time left to enjoy nature. Almost gone are the days when Mom instructed, "Go out and don't come back until dinner time", which gave ample opportunity for kids to explore the natural world, even if they didn't realize that was an important part of what they were doing.

Recognizing something like nature-deficit disorder 27 years ago, Brother Brennan, with support from like-minded people and the RC School Board, opened the Environmental Education Centre. Now fondly known as "The Brother Brennan Centre" and operated by the charitable organization the Environmental Education Commission, this wonderful place is surrounded by ponds, bogs, woods and wildlife deep in the boreal forest off Salmonier Line on the Avalon Peninsula. The Centre's primary goal is to help school children experience nature so that they can learn to love it and, hopefully, want to care for it. In the current era of concern over habitat destruction, reduced biodiversity and climate change the Brother Brennan Centre was an idea ahead of its time. The Centre continues its operations enthusiastically and its school programs are supported by the Eastern School District. Each year almost 2,000 school children (Grades 5 through 8 and Grade 10) stay overnight at the Centre and enjoy a two-day program that immerses them in nature and environmental activities.

The Brother Brennan Centre is not just for classes from inner city schools where one would expect nature-deficit disorder to be most prevalent. Any school from the Eastern School District is welcome. All schools, no matter where they are, have some students who are so caught up in their world of schedules and electronic gadgets that they aren't making time to experience nature. Many students have never looked closely at plants, animals and fungi, let alone have a feel for how they (and us) interact and they have little appreciation for what's around them and what they might lose if no one cares.

Happily, at the other end of the spectrum, there are also students who spend much time in the woods and are well in tune with nature. Sometimes they don't recognize the value of the skills that they have developed through hunting, fishing, camping etc. When they come to the Brother Brennan Centre with their classmates they find that they are ahead of the class, maybe for the first time. Yet even these students often lack someone who can explain to them what they are seeing and how it is part of a bigger picture and what they can do to protect it. During their two-day visit to the Centre, teaching staff do their best to help students learn, understand and appreciate as much as they can about the local environment.

Besides learning about Newfoundland and Labrador's natural environment, bonuses of a class visit include class spirit building, ideas for outdoors learning opportunities, class memories galore and

opportunities to develop social and independence skills.

Programs at the Centre cover curriculum outcomes. In the course of a day students may do science (studying native plants, animals and habitats), art (painting by the pond) and physical education (cooperatively building emergency shelters). The evening is spent hiking (physical education) to the fairy stump where they share Newfoundland fairy stories (social studies, language arts). Afterwards they might enjoy active environmental games (physical education, science) and a campfire with songs (music) and more stories (language arts). Outdoor games are an important part of the program. They help students become comfortable with nature and being away from home. Being safe and having fun are the Centre's teaching staffs' first priorities. If students are happy they can learn. A great feeling of warmth and purpose usually builds up over two days at the Brother Brennan Centre. Anecdotal reports are continually flowing in of students returning home and talking about their trip for days afterwards. Sometimes students who came in Grade 7 twenty years ago return as teachers with their own class of students and bring with them fond stories of their previous visit.

Programs, resources and facilities at the Brother Brennan Centre have evolved over the past 27 years. Thanks to Newfoundland's Green Fund, an exciting change in 2009 was the installation of two wind turbines which generate almost all of the electrical needs for the Centre. They not only replace the noisy, smelly and greenhouse gas producing diesel generator, but also provide a wonderful opportunity to teach students first hand about clean energy and climate change which has become part of the core programming at the Centre. Age appropriate climate change programs help students understand what climate change is, why it's happening and what they can do about it. The wind turbines are a visible sign that technology can provide part of the solution, but we hope that students will be inspired to actively reduce their carbon footprint on their return home.

Nature-deficit disorder can only be overcome by hands-on experience in nature. Our world desperately needs people who care enough about habitat destruction, species loss and issues such as climate change that they do something about it. Education on these issues, exposing students to nature and curriculum outcomes all happen at the same time at the Brother Brennan Centre. It's a great opportunity for experiential learning in all these areas as well as being a lot of fun and building memories for kids.

The Brother Brennan Environmental Education Centre is open for schools in spring (May and June) and fall (September to the end of November). Currently the 2 day/1 night program, including all food and accommodation costs just $41 per student. Transport is extra. To find out more take a look at the new website at www.brotherbrennancentre.ca . If you would like to bring your class to the Brother Brennan Centre contact Bill Tucker at billtucker@esdnl.ca. There are still a few openings left for spring 2010.

Obviously students need to get outdoors for more than a two-day trip to the Brother Brennan Centre or similar place. You probably already make the most of local places that offer day field trips; however, have you thought of taking students outdoors to places within easy walking distance of your school? This could help ward off nature-deficit disorder if students do it as a frequent part of their class routine. Administrative details aside, this idea may seem daunting so I have put together a few tips from my experience that may help. I mostly teach students in Grades 5 to 8, but some of these ideas should be appropriate for students in other grades.

- Potential places to explore nature might include the school grounds, a stream, a park, a bog, woods, a beach, an old graveyard, a pond, a trail or just a patch of grass and shrubs.
- Use your imagination to decide which parts of the curriculum you will cover outdoors. It could be a combination of subjects and don't forget the physical education component.
- Try to keep it simple or you won't do it.
- Things change quickly with the seasons so you can return to the same place often and see different things.
- Students will be excited when you first start taking them outdoors and it can take ages to get ready, but the more often they do it the quicker they will get ready and settle.
- Before setting out give students clear guidelines about what you expect from them. If necessary, stop to remind them but try not to nag.
- Encourage students to come prepared for outdoors. At first they won't always believe you if you say they need warm clothing. If they won't wear it and

they get cold then they will learn from experience. However, rain plus cold are a recipe for hypothermia, so postpone your plans if you need to.

• Don't wait for summer weather – once it gets hot students start to fade and don't have as much energy. On warm days if students are getting too hot find some shade. Make sure to include water-bottle, sunscreen and sunhat on the kit list.

• There's a lot to explore in winter too – twigs and buds, birds, lichens, animal tracks, patterns and amazing snow and ice formations.

• If students are getting cold, try to move to a place in the sun and out of the wind. Playing an active game such as "Simon Says" can help warm everyone.

• If you are teaching a group of students outdoors on a sunny day then you should be the one standing with the sun in your eyes, not your students.

• Have everyone use the washroom before you set out.

• Consider forming a buddy system to keep students safe. Always count students before you leave and before you return to make sure you haven't lost anyone.

• Take a small first-aid kit.

• Have fun. If you are having fun then the students will too.

• If something exciting appears, such as a bird or a squirrel, take the time to let everyone watch and admire it even if you were in the middle of something 'important'.

• Having an active game, activity or brisk walk at the start of your outing helps to expend excess energy and prepare everyone for quieter activities.

• Take time to get everyone to close their eyes, be silent and listen. It's amazing what you can hear when you do this. Spreading everyone out over a largish area usually helps to minimize distraction from each other.

• If what you are doing isn't working, move onto something else.

• When doing a quiet activity such as writing or painting, sit close to students whom you know will have trouble staying at a quiet activity. Once these students have reached their limit try taking them a short distance away from the others to quietly explore for something exciting such as bugs or just to 'hang out'.

• At the Centre we need a ratio of one adult to ten students. I believe the same is true for outings from schools. Having one or two extra adults really helps if you give them a clear idea of what you want them to do. If you are interpreting nature, everyone can see small things better if they are in small groups. Everyone doesn't have to do exactly the same thing at the same time.

• Don't be afraid that you don't know the names of all the plants, trees, birds, rocks, insects etc. What is important is your enthusiasm for them. Students can make up names for creatures and find out the real name later if they wish.

• If looking for bugs is part of your plan encourage students to search under stones, wood and garbage as well as in the grass and other vegetation. Replace rocks and wood as it was.

• Encourage students to use all their senses. Some students are afraid to touch plants etc. having been raised to be afraid of dirt. These are the students who really need to get out. Games are great for connecting students with nature.

• Above all, make going outdoors a positive experience for students so that they will want to do it again.

Helen Spencer is an environmental education teacher at the Brother Brennan Environmental Education Centre with the Eastern School District. She has a B.Sc in Zoology and a Ph.D in Ecology from the University of Newcastle upon Tyne in England and a B.Ed from Memorial University of Newfoundland.

I Am Canadian

by JACINTA MCGRATH

Dear The Olympics,

Please stop being so awesome so I can get to sleep at a decent hour…

Thanks in advance,
Jacinta McGrath (a devoted fan)

Given the choice, I don't think I would have chosen to be anywhere else in the world other than in Vancouver for the week of February 12-18. My journey to the Olympic Games began back in May 2009 when I received notification that I was among the lucky lotto winners to score tickets for four Olympic sporting events. Nine months later, two flight stopovers, a twelve hour car drive, and I was officially on Highway 1 headed for downtown Vancouver.

Stepping out of our pimped out 'Team Canada' Hyundai, one could immediately get a sense of the Olympic fever that was sweeping over the city and encompassing all that was Vancouver 2010. Before I knew it, my feet were carrying me along the fan-filled streets as my mind became enthralled over the waves of red and white that ebbed and flowed between restaurants, pubs and sporting venues alike.

The first event that I attended was the opening women's hockey game – Canada vs. Slovakia. Watching Canadian hockey on home soil was truly a wonderful experience. Two minutes after the puck dropped the Canadian women scored. The crowd went wild, fans were up on their feet and a thunderous roar could be heard as it bellowed beyond the walls of Canada Hockey Place. A total of seven goals were scored in the first period and not surprisingly the Canadians went on to beat their outmatched Slovakian opponents by a score of 18-0.

Despite the uneven score at the end of regulation time, what I witnessed at the end of this game will not leave my mind for a long time. Just as the Slovakian team were skating off the ice after an obvious loss they held their sticks up high and their heads even higher as they saluted the Canadian fans with pride. I think the 20,000 other individuals sitting in their seats felt as I did at that moment and were so humbled by this sportsman like gesture that it brought the crowd to its feet with an emotion-filled applause. The gesture was so simple, yet so powerful. Although no words were communicated, one could tell that these women were so proud to be a part of something as special as the Olympic Games. They were honoured to be in our great nation and the capacity crowd of mostly Canadians warmly embraced our foreign visitors. Relishing in the moment, the Slovakians skated around the ice several times with smiles on their faces, waving graciously to the crowd and for that brief period the score really didn't matter. I was so proud to be Canadian.

As the days went on, among other things, I had the privilege of witnessing the strength of the pairs figure skaters and a nail biting curling match between Kevin Martin's Canadian rink and the 'fancy pants' Norwegian opponents who eventually came head to head in a gold medal showdown later the week. Although I was not among those fortunate enough to get my hands on a men's Canadian hockey game, I did have tickets to see the infamous Russian team in action. The game itself was great, but similar to my experience earlier the week it was what happened after the game that left me with a lasting impression on the significance of the Olympic Games. As the 20,000 fans emptied out of the arena to meet up with the crowds of people already roaming the busy streets of downtown Vancouver, something very special happened. High atop a Vancouver sky rise, a young guy stepped out onto his patio with his stereo propped up onto his shoulder and loudly played "O Canada". On cue, and almost as if previously practiced, about 40,000 people stopped what they were doing, and joined in on the singing of our national anthem. With glowing hearts that massive throng of people sang in chorus the song that makes us one as a nation. It was a beautiful moment and I can honestly say that I have never felt more patriotic in my life than I did at that time.

Since returning home from the Olympic Games I have given a great deal of thought of how these games

tie into what we do in our own classrooms every day. It is vital, as teachers, that we challenge our students to dare to dream big. No valley too deep, no mountain too high. As Joannie Rochette best demonstrated grit and determination with the death of her mother before going on to win a bronze medal, we must encourage students to forge forward with adversity and courage. As individuals who play such an important role in the lives of young people, it is essential that we create opportunities for our students to grow and become all they can be. Whether it be on a world stage or a local gymnasium floor, we must encourage students to become a part of something – a sports team, a craft club, a choir; something that makes them feel good about themselves and provides them the opportunity to share in that feeling of belonging to something great.

Becoming enveloped in sporting events for hours on end each day is also a stark reminder of the importance of healthy living in and around our school communities. Quality daily physical activity cannot be underestimated in our schools. We need to encourage life long physical activity practices and provide leadership opportunities for our youth to shine. The Olympics are a shining example of what we need to reinforce in our locker rooms and practice venues – healthy competition, sportsmanship, camaraderie, and an innate instinct to be the best you can be. Although our students may not don the number 99 on the back of their t-shirts, at the end of the day, they should all have been given the opportunity to feel like the 'great one'.

My name is Jacinta McGrath. I am Canadian.

Jacinta McGrath is currently on leave as Physical Education teacher at Stella Maris Academy in Trepassey.

Calendar

PRIMARY/ELEMENTARY SIC CONFERENCE
April 28-29, 2010
Terra Nova Park Lodge. Presenting Dr. David Booth, "Differentiating Literacy Instruction". Registration information: www.matthewelementary.nl.ca/pesichome.htm

SYMPOSIUM ANNUEL FRANCOPHONE
6-7 mai 2010
Ottawa, ON. Enseigner à l'école de langue française en milieu minoritaire, c'est contribuer à un vaste projet de société. Devant une francophonie qui se diversifie, le quotidien doit tenir compte des besoins variés des élèves qui dépassent largement le cadre pédagogique traditionnel. En plus d'apprendre, l'élève d'aujourd'hui qui se prépare à intégrer la francophonie doit construire son identité, souvent s'approprier la langue s'il provient d'un foyer exogame, ou trouver sa place s'il est nouvel arrivant. Ce symposium annuel de la FCE portera sur les outils qui appuient le personnel enseignant devant des responsabilités qui se complexifient.
www.ctf-fce.ca/symposium2010

ICED 2010: 21ST INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS ON THE EDUCATION OF THE DEAF
July 18-22, 2010
Vancouver, BC. Check the Congress website at www.ICED2010.com for updates on registration and hotel information, keynote and International Summit presenter biographies; social activities and post Congress Alaskan cruise.

DYSLEXIA: SIGNS, SYMPTOMS AND SOLUTIONS
September 25, 2010
Harbourview Ballroom, Delta Hotel and Conference Centre, St. John's. Presented by the Council of Special Services. Presenter: Sally Shearman, Ontario Branch of the International Dyslexia Association. Early bird registration deadline: June 25, 2010. Registration forms will be posted on the NLTA website at www.nlta.nl.ca. For further information contact Keith Adey, Tel: 709-489-6481; keithadey@nf.sympatico.ca

EDGE CONFERENCE 2010
October 12-15, 2010
Delta Hotel, St. John's. *E-Learning: The Horizon and Beyond.* An international conference on the Use of Technologies in K-12 and Post-Secondary Education. For the Call for Papers and conference details visit www.mun.ca/edge2010.

Dates to Remember

April 2010

Apr 1	**Deadline:** Johnson Bursary Applications
Apr 15	**Deadline:** PD Fund applications
Apr 15	**Deadline:** Notice of postponement of Deferred Salary Leave or withdrawal from DSLP
Apr 30	**Deadline:** Deferred Salary Leave Applications
Apr 30	**Deadline:** Year-end resignation from contract

May 2010

May 7	**Deadline:** Notification by Board of layoff
May 9-15	Branch Election Week
May 20	**Deadline:** PD Fund applications
May 28-29	NLTA Executive Meeting

June 2010

June 15	**Deadline:** Notification by board of acceptance/rejection of Deferred Salary Leave requests
June 17	**Deadline:** PD Fund applications

CONTACT 2010
The Learning Summit

August 10-13, 2010
Sir Wilfred Grenfell College, Corner Brook
Information has been mailed to schools. For guidelines and application visit **www.nlta.nl.ca** and click on "*Online Forms*"

or contact the NLTA Professional Development Division
Tel: 726-3223 or toll free at 1-800-563-3599

Teachers must forward applications to their branch by **Monday, May 3, 2010** for submission to CONTACT Selection Committee.

NLTA Scholarships

To obtain an application form visit the NLTA website at **www.nlta.nl.ca** and click "**Online Forms**" or contact the NLTA Professional Development Division, Tel: 726-3223 or toll free at 1-800-563-3599.

Application Deadline:
July 31, 2010